

NAN of MUSIC MOUNTAIN

By Frank H. Spearman
Author of Whispering Smith

DE SPAIN BARELY ESCAPES DEATH FROM AMBUSH AND HE LEARNS MORE ABOUT HIS ENEMIES—NAN SHOWS HER CONTEMPT FOR HIM

The region around Sleepy Cat, a railroad division town in the Rocky mountain mining country, is infested with stage robbers, cattle rustlers and gunmen. The worst of these belong to the Morgan gang, whose hang-out is in Morgan Gap, a fertile valley about 20 miles from Sleepy Cat, and near Calabasas, a point where the horses are changed on the stage line from the Thief river mines to the railroad. Jeffries, superintendent of the Mountain division, decides to break up the depredations of the bad men and appoints Henry De Spain general manager of the stage line. De Spain goes to Calabasas with John Lefever as his assistant. Trouble starts when Sassoon of the gang cuts the throat of Elpass, a coach driver. De Spain goes to Morgan gap with Lefever and Bob Scott, an Indian, at night and arrests Sassoon. The gang threatens to kill De Spain. Sassoon escapes jail. Lefever tells Henry he will have to keep up his reputation as a gunman bent on breaking the Morgans.

CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"Meaning that in this country you can't begin on a play like pulling Sassoon out from under his friends' noses without keeping to the pace—without a second and third act. You dragged Sassoon by his hair out of the gap; good. You surprised everybody; good. But you can't very well stop at that. Henry, such a feat by itself doesn't insure a permanent reputation. Henry, it is, so to say, merely a 'blow-out' reputation—one that men reserve the right to recall at any moment. And the worst of it is, if they ever do recall it, you are worse off than when before they extended the brittle bundle to you."

"Jingo, John! For a stage blacksmith you are some spicler!" De Spain added an impatient, not to say contemptuous, exclamation concerning the substance of Lefever's talk. "I didn't ask them for a reputation. This man interfered with my guard—in fact, tried to cut his throat, didn't he?"

"Would have done it if Frank had been an honest man."

"That is all there is to it, isn't it?" Lefever tapped the second finger of one fat hand gently on the table. "Practically, practically all, Henry, yes. You don't quite understand, but you have the right idea."

"What do you want me to do—back a horse and shoot two guns at once up and down Main street, cowboy style?"

Lefever kept his patience without difficulty. "No, no. You'll understand."

"Scott advised me to run down to Medicine Bend for a few days to let the Morgans cool off."

"Right. That was the first step. The few days are a thing of the past. I suppose you know," continued Lefever, in an unmodulated tone as he could assume to convey information that could not be regarded as wholly cheerful, "that they expect to get you for this Sassoon job."

De Spain flushed. But the red anger lasted only a moment. "Who are they?" he asked after a pause.

"Deaf Sandusky, Logan, of course, the Calabasas bunch, and the Morgans."

De Spain regarded his companion unamably. "What do they expect I'll be doing while they are getting me?"

Lefever raised a hand deprecatingly. "Don't be overconfident, Henry; that's your danger. I know you can take care of yourself. All I want to do is to get the folks here acquainted with your ability, without taking unnecessary chances. You see, people are not now asking questions of one another; they are asking them of themselves. Who and what is this newcomer—an accident or a genuine arrival? A common snail or a real explosion? Don't get excited," he added, in an effort to soothe De Spain's obvious irritation. "You have the idea, Henry. It's time to show yourself."

"I can't very well do business here without showing myself," retorted De Spain.

"But it is a thing to be managed," persisted Lefever. "Now, suppose—since the topic is up—we 'show' in Main street for a while."

"Suppose we do," echoed De Spain ungraciously.

"That will crack the debut ice. We will call at Harry Tension's hotel, and then go to his new rooms—go right to society headquarters first—that's my theory of doing it. If anybody has any shooting in mind, Tension's is a quiet and orderly place. And if a man declines to eat anybody up at Tension's, we put him down, Henry, as not ravenously hungry."

"One man I would like to see is that sheriff, Druel, who let Sassoon get out."

"Ready to interview him now?"

"I've got some telegrams to answer."

"Those will keep. The Morgans are in town. We'll start out and find somebody."

It was wet and sloppy outside, but Lefever was indifferent to the rain, and De Spain thought it would be unadvised to complain of it.

When, followed by Lefever, he walked into the lobby of Tension's

hotel a few moments later the office was empty. Nevertheless, the news of the appearance of Sassoon's captor spread. The two satiated into the billiard hall, which occupied a deep room adjoining the office and opened with large plate-glass windows on Main street. Every table was in use. A fringe of spectators in the chairs, or possibly watching the pool games, turned their eyes toward De Spain—those that recognized him distinguishing him by nods and whispers to others.

Among several groups of men standing before the long bar, one party of four near the front end likewise engaged the interest of those keener observers who were capable of foreseeing situations. These men, Satterlee Morgan, the cattleman; Bull Page, one of his cowboys; Sheriff Druel, and Judge Druel, his brother, had been drinking together. They did not see Lefever and his companion as the two came in through the rear lobby door. But Lefever, on catching sight of them, welcomed his opportunity. Walking directly forward, he laid his hand on Satt Morgan's shoulder. As the cattleman turned, Lefever, gently grasping his hand, introduced De Spain to each of the party in turn.

Morgan threw the brim of his weather-beaten but back from his tanned face. He wore a mustache and a chin whisker of that variety designated in the mountains by the appropriate name "Spinach." But his smile, which drew his cheeks into wrinkles all about his long, round nose, was not unfriendly. He looked with open interest from his frank but not overtrustworthy eyes at De Spain. "I heard," he said in a good-natured, slightly nasal tone, "you made a surprise call on us one day last week."

"And I want to say," returned De Spain, equally amiable, "that if I had had any idea you folks would take it so hard—I mean, as an affront intended to any of you—I never would have gone into the gap after Sassoon. I just assumed—making a mistake as I now realize—that my scrap would be with Sassoon, not with the Morgans."

Satt's face wrinkled into a humorous grin. "You sure kicked up some alkali."

De Spain nodded candidly. "More than I intended to. And I say—without any intention of impertinence to anybody else—Sassoon is a cur. I supposed when I brought him in here after so much riding, that we had sheriff enough to keep him." He looked at Druel with such composure that the latter for a moment was nonplussed. Then he discharged a volley of oaths, and demanded what De Spain meant. De Spain did not move. He refused to see the angry sheriff. "That is where I made my second mistake," he continued, speaking to Morgan and forcing his tone just enough to be heard. Druel, with more hard words, began to abuse the railroad for not paying taxes enough to build a decent jail. De Spain took another tack. He eyed the sheriff calmly as the latter continued to draw away and left De Spain standing somewhat apart from the rest of the group. "Then it may be I am making another mistake, Druel, in blaming you. It may not be your fault."

"The fault is, you're fresh," cried Druel, warming up as De Spain appeared to cool. The line of tippers backed away from the bar. De Spain stepping toward the sheriff, raised his hand in a friendly way. "Druel, you're hurting yourself by your talk. Make me your deputy again—some time," he concluded, "and I'll see that Sassoon stays where he is put."

"I'll just do that," cried Druel, with a very strong word, and he raised his hand in turn. "Next time you want him locked up, you can take care of him yourself."

The sharp crack of a rifle cut off the words; a bullet tore like a lightning-bolt across De Spain's neck, crashed through a mahogany plaster back of the bar, and embedded itself in the wall. The shot had been aimed from the street for his head. The noisy room instantly hushed. Spectators sat glued to their chairs. White-faced players leaned motionless against the

tables. De Spain alone had acted; all that the bartenders could ever remember after the single rifle shot was seeing his hand go back as he whirled and shot instantly toward the heavy report. He had whipped out his gun and fired sideways through the window at the sound.

That was all. The bartenders breathed and looked again. Men were crowding like mad through the back doors. De Spain, at the cigar case, looking intently into the rainy street, lighted from the corner by a dingy lamp. The four men near him had not stirred, but, startled and alert, the right hand of each covered the butt of a revolver. De Spain moved first. While the pool players jammed the back doors to escape, he spoke to, without looking at, the bartender. "What's the matter with your curtains?" he demanded, snatching his revolver and pointing with an epithet to the big sheet of plate glass. "Is this the way you build up business for the house?"

Those close enough to the window saw that the bare pane had been cut, just above the middle, by two bullet holes. Curious men examined both fractures when De Spain and Lefever had left the saloon. The first hole was the larger. It had been made by a high-powered rifle; the second was from a bullet of a Colt's revolver; it was remarked as a miracle of gun-play that the two were hardly an inch apart.

In the street a few minutes later, De Spain and Lefever encountered Scott, who, with his back lunched up, his cheap black hat pulled well down over his ears, his hands in his trousers pockets and his thin coat collar modestly turned against the drizzling rain, was walking across the parkway from the station.

"Sassoon is in town," exclaimed Lefever with certainty after he had told the story. He waited for the Indian's opinion. Scott, looking through the water dripping from the brim of his sombrero derby, gave it in one word. "Was," he amended with a quiet smile.

"Let's make sure," insisted Lefever. "Supposing he might be in town yet, Bob, where is he?"

Scott gazed up the street through the rain lighted by yellow lamps on the obscure corners, and looked down the street toward the black reaches of the river. "If he's here, you'll find him in one of two places, Tension's—"

"But we've just come from Tension's," objected Lefever.

"I mean, across the street, upstairs; or at Jim Kitchen's barn. If he was hurried to get away," added Scott reflectively, "he would slip upstairs over there as the nearest place to hide; if he had time he would make for the barn, where it would be easy to cache his rifle."

Lefever took the lapel of the scout's coat in his hand. "Then you, Bob, go out and see if you can get the whole story. I'll take the barn. Let Henry go over to Tension's and wait at the head of the stairs till we can get back there."

De Spain found no difficulty in locating the flight of marble stairs that led to the gambling rooms. It was the only lighted entrance in the side street. No light shone at the head of the stairs, but a doorway on the left opened into a large room brilliantly lighted by chandeliers. Around three sides of this



He Whirled and Shot Instantly Toward the Heavy Report.

room were placed the keno layouts, roulette wheels, faro tables and other gambling devices. Off the casino it self small cardrooms opened.

The big room was well filled for a wet night. De Spain took a place in shadow near one side of the doorway facing the street door and at times looked within for the loosely jointed frame, crooked neck, tousled forehead, and malevolent face of the cattle thief. He could find in the many figures scattered about the room none resembling the one he sought.

A man entering the place spoke to another coming out. De Spain overheard the exchange. "Duke got rid of his steers yet?" asked the first.

"Not yet."

"Slow game."

"The old man sold quite a bunch this time. The way he's playing now he'll last twenty-four hours."

De Spain, following the newcomer, strolled into the room and, beginning at one side, proceeded in leisurely fashion from wheel to wheel and table to table inspecting the players. Few looked at him and none paid any attention to his presence. At Tension's table the idlers crowded about one

player whom De Spain, without getting closer in among the onlookers than he wanted to, could not see.

Tension, as De Spain approached, happened to look up wearily. He spoke in an impassive tone across the intervening heads: "What happened to your rest tie, Henry?"

De Spain put up his hand to his neck, and looked down at a loose end hanging from his soft cravat. It had been torn by the bullet meant for his head. He turned the end inside his collar. "A Calabasas man tried to untie it a few minutes ago. He missed the knot."

Tension did not hear the answer. He had reverted to his case. De Spain moved on and, after making the round of the scattered tables, walked again through the doorway, only to meet, as she stood hesitating and apparently about to enter the room, Nan Morgan.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Gambling Room.

They confronted each other blankly. To Nan's confusion was added her embarrassment at her personal appearance. Her hat was wet, and the limp shoulders of her khaki jacket and the front of her silk blouse showed the wilting effect of the rain. In one hand she clutched wet riding gloves. Her cheeks, either from the cold rain or mental stress, fairly burned, and her eyes, which had seemed when he encountered her, fired with some resolve, changed to an expression of dismay.

This was hardly for more than an instant. Then her lips tightened, her eyes dropped, and she took a step to one side to avoid De Spain and enter the gambling room. He stepped in front of her. She looked up, furious. "What do you mean?" she exclaimed with indignation. "Let me pass."

The sound of her voice restored his self-possession. He made no move to get out of her way, indeed he rather pointedly continued to obstruct her. "You've made a mistake, I think," he said evenly.

"I have not," she replied with resentment. "Let me pass."

"I think you have. You don't know where you are going," he persisted, his eyes bent uncomprehendingly on hers.

She showed increasing irritation at his attempt to exculpate her. "I know perfectly well where I am going," she retorted with heat.

"Then you know," he returned steadily. "That you've no business to enter such a place."

His opposition seemed only to anger her. "I know where I have business. I need no admissions from you as to what places I enter. You are impertinent, insulting. Let me pass!"

His stubborn opposition showed no signs of weakening before her resolve. "One question," he said, ignoring her angry words: "Have you ever been in these rooms before?"

He thought she quailed the least bit before his searching look. She even hesitated as to what to say. But if her eyes fell momentarily it was only to collect herself. "Yes," she answered, looking up unflinchingly.

Her resolute eyes supported her defiant word and openly challenged his interference, but he met her once more quietly. "I'm sorry to hear it," he rejoined. "But that won't make any difference. You can't go in tonight."

"I will go in," she cried.

"No," he returned slowly, "you are not going in—not, at least, while I am here."

They stood immovable. He tried to reason her out of her determination. She resented every word he offered. "You are most insolent," she exclaimed. "You are interfering in something that is no concern of yours. You have no right to act in this outrageous way. If you don't stand aside I'll call for help."

"Nan!" De Spain spoke her name suddenly and threateningly. His words fell fast, and he checked her for an instant with his vehemence. "We met in the gap a week ago. I said I was telling you the exact truth. Did I do it?"

"I don't care what you said or what you did—"

"Answer me," he said sharply; "did I tell you the truth?"

"I don't know or care—"

"Yes, you do know—"

"What you say or do—"

"I told you the truth then, and I am telling it now. I will never see you enter a gambling room as long as I can prevent it. Call for help if you like."

She looked at him with amazement. She seemed about to speak—to make another protest. Instead, she turned suddenly away, hesitated again, put both hands to her face, burst into tears, and hurried toward the stairs. De Spain followed her. "Let me take you to where you are going?"

Nan turned on him, her eyes blazing through her tears, with a single, scornful, furious word: "No!" She quickened her step from him in such confusion that she ran into two men just reaching the top of the stairs. They separated with alacrity, and gave her passage. One of the men was Lefever, who, despite his size, was extremely nimble in getting out of her urgent way, and quick in lifting his hat. She fairly raced down the flight of steps, leaving Lefever looking after her in astonishment. He turned to De Spain: "Now, who the deuce was that?"

De Spain ignored his question by asking another: "Did you find him?" Lefever shook his head. "Not a trace; I covered Main street. I guess Bob was right. Nobody home here, Henry?"

"Nobody we want."

"Nothing going on?"

"Not a thing. If you will wait here for Bob, I'll run over to the office and answer those telegrams."

De Spain started for the stairs. "Henry," called Lefever, as his companion trotted hastily down, "if you catch up to her, kindly apologize for a fat man."

But De Spain was balked of an opportunity to follow Nan. In the street he ran into Scott. "Did you get the story?" demanded De Spain.

"Part of it."

"Was it Sassoon?"

Scott shook his head. "Deaf Sandusky. That man Sandusky."—Bob smiled a sickly smile—"doesn't miss very often. He was bothered a little by his friends being all around you."

The two regarded each other for a moment in silence. "Why," asked De Spain, holding a little, "should that d—d hunking brute try to blow my head off just now?"

"Only for the good of the order, Henry," grinned the scout.

"Nice job Jeff has picked out for me," muttered De Spain grimly, "standing up in these Sleepy Cat barrooms to be shot at. Is he the fellow John calls the butcher?"

"That's what everybody calls him, I guess."

The two rejoined Lefever at the head of the stairs and the three dis-



"Answer Me," He Said Sharply. "Did I Tell You the Truth?"

cussed the news. Even Lefever seemed more serious when he heard the report. Scott, when asked where Sandusky now was, nodded toward the big room in front of them.

Lefever looked toward the gambling tables. "We'll go in and look at him," he turned to Scott to invite his comment on the proposal. "Think twice, John," suggested the Indian. "If there's any trouble in a crowd like that, somebody that has no interest in De Spain or Sandusky is pretty sure to get hurt."

"I don't mean to start anything," explained Lefever. "I only want De Spain to look at him."

But sometimes things start themselves. Lefever found Sandusky at a faro table. At his side sat his partner, Logan. Three other players, together with the onlookers, and the dealer—whose tumbled hair fell partly over the visor that protected his eyes from the glare of the overhead light—made up the group. The table stood next to that where Tension, white-faced and impassive under the heat and light, held the chair.

Lefever took a position at one end of the table, where he faced Sandusky, and De Spain, just behind his shoulder, had a chance to look the two Calabasas men closely over. Sandusky again impressed him as a powerful man, who, beyond an ample stomach, carried his weight without showing it.

De Spain credited readily the extraordinary stories he had heard of Sandusky's dexterity with a revolver or a rifle. That he should so lately have missed a shot at so close range was partly explained now that De Spain perceived Sandusky's small, hard, brown eyes were somewhat unnaturally bright, and that his brows knit every little while in his effort to collect himself. Sandusky's brown shirt sprawled open at the collar, and De Spain remembered again the flashy waistcoat, fastened at the last button-hole by a cut-glass button.

At Sandusky's side sat his crony in all important undertakings—a much smaller, sparer man, with aggressive shoulders and restless eyes, Logan was the lookout of the pair, and his roving glance lighted on De Spain before the latter had inspected him more than a moment. He lost no time in beginning on De Spain with an insolent question as to what he was looking at. De Spain, his eye bent steadily on him, answered with a tone neither of apology nor pronounced offense: "I am looking at you."

Lefever hitched at his trousers cheerily and, stepping away from De Spain, took a position just behind the dealer. "What are you looking at me for?" demanded Logan insolently.

De Spain raised his voice to match exactly the tone of the inquiry. "So I'll know you next time."

De you believe that De Spain is foolhardy in hunting for trouble with the gangsters? And hadn't he better be minding his own business instead of trying to flirt with Nan Morgan?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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A MINISTER'S CONFESSION

Rev. W. H. Warner, Myersville, Md., writes: "My trouble was sciatica. My back was affected and took the form of lumbago. I also had neuralgia, cramps in my muscles, pressure or sharp pain on the top of my head, and nervous dizziness spells. I had other symptoms showing my kidneys were at fault, so I took Dodd's Kidney Pills. They were the means of saving my life. I write to say that your medicine restored me to perfect health." Be sure and get "DODD'S," the name with the three D's for diseased, disordered, degenerated kidneys. Just as Rev. Warner did, no similarly named article will do—Adv.



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SUSPENSE OVER AT LAST

But Stammering Physician Gave Prospective Father a Few Moments of Extreme Uneasiness.

There is a stammering physician out in one of our suburbs. A short time ago, while on a case involving a new arrival, his infirmity led to a rather funny misapprehension.

The husband and prospective father, who by the way, had set his heart on a son and heir, was nervous in pacing the library when the physician entered.

"Well, doctor," said the husband, forcing a smile, "is it rains?"

"It is rains," began the doctor.

"Triplets! Great! Great!"

"Qu-qu-qu—" stammered the doctor.

"Quadruplets! Holy smoke!"

"No-no," cried the doctor. "Qu-qu-qu—the contrary. Tri-try to take it philosophically, my friend. It's just a girl."—Boston Transcript.

Had No Actual Evidence.

It is on record that the prince of Orange, filled with rage because he had been beaten at Fleurus, Leuze, Steinkerque, and Nerwinde, said, addressing to the marshal of Luxembourg: "Can it be that I shall never beat that hunchback?"

"How does he know that I am a hunchback?" said the French marshal. "He never saw my back; I always saw his."

A toy exhibition in France has attracted much artistic discussion.



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